/365/

Part 2

Economic Life

[31] The home of the Yamana /Yahgan/ is that vast maze of islands extending farthest into Antarctic waters like irregular fragments of land broken off from the solid bulk of the South American continent. It is [32] swept by raging storms. Foam-crested waves beat against its naked shores. The restless brine eats into its rocks. Heavy showers and dense snowstorms seldom permit the golden light of the sun to break through, and the entire landscape is wrapped in a weird gloom. The temperature of the air is kept low by the cold ocean current from the south. The large expanse of water favors abundant rainfall, and a disagreeable dampness soaks everything. Heavy frosts and extreme drops in temperature are, to be sure, almost entirely absent because of the moderating ocean, but the moisture-laden air and the dripping dampness everywhere have a more unfavorable effect on plants, land animals, and human beings than cold would have (p. 21 /untranslated/). Only a few hardy specimens of flora (p. 26 /untranslated/) and fauna (p. 33 /untranslated/) can flourish. For the human beings destined to live in this cheerless region, narrow limits have been set for their demands on life and for the development of material possessions.

[81] Actually, the Yamana have not merely adapted themselves to the natural conditions of their homeland to the extent they were forced to do so; mastering their environment, they have created for themselves a dignified human existence of the most modest kind. Specifically, they have arranged their affairs so advantageously that, under the given conditions, another primitive people could scarcely improve anything essential. Creative intelligence and long experience have taught them to make their very meager external resources serve them. Their extremely limited material possessions relieve them of all cares with regard to daily necessities and permit them to enjoy life. Almost everything the Yamana calls his own is very functional. In his various arrangements he is far from having achieved the perfection and artistic accomplishments manifested by the peoples on the opposite side of the globe in the Arctic regions. The things that inhibit and impede him are almost completely beyond his influence.

/386 cont./

serves as shelter for a night or for a few days. Clothing, ornaments, and household furnishings could scarcely be scantier or more modest. Weapons and implements in their very simplicity, which is surprising, give evidence of much inventive intelligence. Whatever a person needs, he knows how to make and to obtain. In the matter of providing for his subsistence, everyone is on his own and /387/ is master of his environment. Trades have not developed, and the fundamental equality of all persons has likewise prevented the rise of social stratification. One and the same justice applies to all. Everyone enjoys complete independence from others, which is why only the uniformity of customs and habits, language, and racial characteristics provides the outer and inner bond that unites all the Yamana into an ethnic entity.

The Yamana way of life as water nomads has without doubt contributed somewhat to the peculiar shape of their bodies. To what extent this is an advantage to them cannot be discussed here. Their small stature is all the more conspicuous since their neighbor, the Selk'nam, together with the Tehuelche on the mainland, have the tallest stature among all South American Indians. Our Yamana, however, are not only small, but in addition to this they are not very symmetrically developed (p. 214 /unannotated/). A broad, sturdy body with exceedingly strong musculature on the chest and arms rests on weak, thin legs. Excessive breadth is much more noticeable among the women than among the men, and among the former we come across plump figures much more often than among the latter. A total lack of simple grooming, generally coarse features, their perplexed facial expression, and unkempt hair completes the unprepossessing picture of the Yamana Indians. Almost all European travelers, not without ample reason, have expressed thoroughly unfavorable judgments about the physique of our natives (p. 214 /unannotated/). Undeniably, however, they enjoy abundant health and have an unbelievable resistance which enables them to overcome all the hardships of their frosty home and has secured the uninhibited continuance of their people for centuries. True, the Yamana will always be the loser in a contest with other racial groups for physical beauty, but the suitability of his body for the rigors of his way of life and the unfavorableness of his environment is unrivaled. In many respects he is well adapted to his home.

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112 with Spears:87: "One may doubt whether the Yahgan canoe shows greater ingenuity than Yahgan weapons and implements for obtaining food do" /cited in English/.

them to give up their material culture! If interrogated, they *justify* their adherence to the old, their preservation of the things inherited from their fathers, on the grounds that they suffice perfectly for their modest needs and the necessities of their life. The form and construction of their tools represent maximum efficiency within the framework of what is available to them. With these material means they have made their lives comfortable, pleasant, and humanly dignified. The words of Despard (b):680 with regard to the merits of the bark canoe apply absolutely to all their utensils: "Yet no improvements are thought of; what served the father serves the son for a pattern, and would never be departed from for a thousand generations" /cited in English/. They have taken over infinitesimally little from Europeans -- iron, for example. The basic form of their implements has remained unchanged for many centuries.

5. Obtaining Food

• 181 241 The Indian's sole and vital care is centered on the necessary food; his thought and concern day and night are on his subsistence. If he has an exceptionally abundant supply, he feels extraordinarily relieved, and free of care, he abandons himself /512/ to always desired rest. Ordinarily, however, the threat of hunger keeps him on the move day after day, forces him to abandon his hut and change his camp, goads him to a canoe trip or a journey on foot, all depending on whether the prospect of booty beckons here or there (228).

228. According to Despard (b):672, these Indians live only for the business of obtaining food: "The great want with them

/313 cont./

is of food, naturally, and their habits are formed with a view to supply it, and all their implements are to serve in procuring it....Hence are they constantly roaming" /cited in English/.

Food gathering in the widest sense of the term is, after all, the sole and true occupation of our natives. If this exertion were not always obligatory and without exception unavoidable for everyone, there would be great danger that their physical and spiritual well-being would languish. Their work never leads to weakness or to a lessening of their ability. Quite the contrary, despite weariness and exhaustion, despite waste and extreme exertion which are sometimes necessary, the man's hunting and the woman's collecting are so attractive and stimulating, so satisfying and filled with success for the victor, that these things alone make every adult uncomplainingly accept the unavoidable hardships of making a living, and this decreases the pressure of their cares about their daily food. This waste is further reduced by the unfailing prospect of their always finding, here or there and relatively easily, what is absolutely necessary.

Both sexes contribute their share to the support of the family, which consists of father, mother, and children. Not everyone contributes to the same extent, however, but to the manner appropriate to his sex. The woman more than the man is tied down by unavoidable duties to her hut where she must take care of the welfare of her children. What the men accomplishes in one field, she does in another. Both partners are, on the whole, provided equally with obligations, and their co-operation ensures the well-being of the individual family.

Even at first glance it seems natural for the man to take over the exertions of the hunt requiring strength and for the woman to busy herself with the minor collecting of smaller things (314).

314. Hyades (2) 33 has clearly pointed out this division of labor. "Everything connected with the hunt and even the cutting up of the dead animal is the exclusive occupation of the men, just as we have seen that fishing is

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/587 cont./
himself. For instance, he says (GRI.03.116.1916): "Though celery abounds everywhere, they never eat of it" /cited in English/. In GRI the root of this plant is several times and very definitely referred to by him as an "edible root" /cited in English/.

[565] Some people like to roast the celery root on the fire and then chew on it.

It can be seen from these accounts that plant food is widely eaten by the Yamana, hence it is almost always a single individual who sets out to look for it if he feels a desire for it. It would be unjustified, therefore, to maintain that the gathering of such plants is a special activity of the women.

233 463 A cursory review of the contribution of the Indian woman to the subsistence of her family makes us realize that she performs an important service, mainly through gathering shellfish. The things she collects not only bring necessary variety into the monotonous meat diet furnished by the men, but even indispensable certain times when hunting is impossible. With her diligent gathering the woman very often saves her family from suffering considerable hunger.

/588/ 6. The Food Quest throughout the Year

In their manner of living and above all in everything they must provide for their sustenance, the Yamana are and will remain inescapably dependent on their environment. They have adjusted to this inevitable pressure in all their economic adaptations, not the least in their implements and weapons. Darwin (GRI.048) confirms this in his own way: "Nature, which has made nations so invincible here and so effects hereditary, has adapted the Fuegians to the climate and the products of the miserable Archipelago." The causative factor in the new explanations is essentially different.

The mental attitude or disposition of the Indian group, however, also betrays an unmistakable conformity with their own s

/558 cont./

habitation, and this is best expressed in their high degree of contentment. Our natives are uncomplainingly satisfied with all the misfortune they must endure because of the weather, with the sharp restrictions resulting from the scarcity of products of the soil, and with the constant hampering of free movement as a result of the overwhelming forces of nature. One would scarcely believe it possible for a people to be resigned to such few pleasures and such scant comfort. One never hears them complain or grumble about the hard living conditions that have been imposed upon them, and they bear with invariable composure the lot that has befallen them.

Nevertheless, they have not let themselves become a weak plaything of natural forces. In the rigor of battle they have steeled themselves in resistance, and their certainty of triumph gives them that independence and self-reliance that is content even in the most miserable situation. In their struggle with nature for subsistence our Fuegians develop well-trained mental powers and an unsurpassed skill. Even Bridges (b)240 in concise terms credits them with great merit: "They have various methods of hunting and killing birds, and in all they show much skill" /translated from Spanish/. The observations and experience of many generations have alone perfected the efficient methods of trapping and hunting with which every Indian is sure of success without having to waste effort. He practiced them from the days of his youth until he became skillful and steadfast. Many of the manipulations and movements, carried out with adroitness and some effort, seem simple and easy to the eye of a European (307).

307. Bove (c)157 adds to this, saying: "Only someone who has lived among them can have any idea of the effort and cunning which they are obliged to muster in order to obtain the most frugal livelihood for themselves."

the keen hunter and unerring marksman excite admiration. If a European would try his hand at this he would become vividly aware of how stiff and awkward he is at doing the things the Indian does every day.

/412 cont./

hindered in their search for food by the force of storms and waves, as compared to the people in the sheltered channels (414). For

> 414. With remarkable emphasis Holm (1):338 describes the advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of the inner Beagle Channel as contrasted to the people on the outlying islands.

the groups affected, these and other disadvantages are onerous, but they do not change any basic features of the economic life led by the Yamana, for they all live in environmental conditions that are essentially similar.

It is these conditions which have exercised strong, in part inevitable pressure in the shaping of the economy. The Indian is proud of the latter as a creation of his mental powers, and he is fully justified. He must yield to the pressure of the environment to the extent that only an acquisitive gathering-economy is possible for him. This, however, he has developed so favorably for himself that, with little effort, he obtains what he needs for a human existence and what he desires for his well-being. He has not been able to lift himself beyond his dependence on the environment to become its sovereign ruler; nevertheless, he has made it subservient to himself up to the limit of his completely human mental capacity.

1. The Roving Spirit

The Yamana are a peculiarly restless band. They can never remain long in one spot. When they are sitting together, first one and then another will leave the circle to look around by himself or to walk a few steps. If a family has built their hut somewhere, they are impelled to leave it again no later than the third day. An inner unrest moves these people, which they themselves cannot account for, because they were born with it. It is only strikingly noticeable to a European, it sometimes annoys him very much, for example, when he has employed Indians on

L. Gamble--364 8-6 (1919-1924) 1927 [illegible]

•181 his farm. It is generally said of them that they are unreliable and unpredictable. As a matter of fact, one never knows if tomorrow they will keep the promise they definitely gave today. Their feelings and plans change quite /Bill/ suddenly and constantly, like the weather of their homeland. They resemble fidgety birds of passage who feel happy and inwardly calm only when they are moving again in their swaying luck.

The ultimate reasons for their unrest and their urge for movement are easily uncovered. The care about their daily food requirement commands their entire attention, and in order to obtain it they are dependent on the opportunities offered and the propitiousness of the moment. This means not missing an opportunity and, if suddenly confronted with a choice, making the right one. The individual usually does not have much time to consider. If he wants to maintain his advantage, he must act quickly and decisively. Hence he remains, as it were, in a state of tense inner expectation of circumstances that may change at any time of day, in order that he may instantaneously be aware of the situation. He does not even sleep soundly, and when he wakes up, even during the night, he is quite fresh again (p. 38). Just as he sees himself in the midst of an incalculable nexus of natural forces, so his luck in the hunt will unexpectedly appear in this or that unforeseen form, and if he is subjectively ready for quick action, he will successfully seize his opportunity.

[50] Perhaps the Indian is not consciously aware of this subjective state as we have described it, but he always acts from and with a feeling of great certainty that he will surely attain his goal. Long experience helps him to size up the given situation correctly at a glance, or to calculate the impending danger, or to comprehend the limits of what is possible. He is almost never wrong in his decision. In part his inner restlessness may be explained by the fact that he is constantly observing the play of natural forces and the habits of the animals hunted, adjusting to both at the same time. Then he succeeds with the superiority that is confident of victory to master the first and evaluate the second to his advantage. Sometimes one thinks he faces great danger when storms gather or the waves run high, but he is too intimately acquainted with inanimate nature to be mistaken in his judgment. Sometimes a European

/413 cont./

will regard his burning effort as completely hopeless, but not infrequently that is just the time when his booty is more than abundant. Complete satisfaction grows out of the success of which the Indian is confident from the start, and this further increases his reliance on his own ability.

Seasonally, the drive toward restless wandering coincides eleverly with his adopted form of economic management. In Tierra del Fuego agriculture and animal husbandry in a form which our natives would be obliged to choose would be simply impossible. They have no choice but to gather and hunt what nature offers them voluntarily. Now, game animals are driven away from the spot where one of them has been killed. Similarly, it is advisable for a woman to change the place of her gathering activity as soon as possible. Thus, as a matter of principle, a family remains in one place only so long as the meat from one of the larger /414/ animals lasts. If the family is dependent solely upon mussels, they set out even sooner. They do not stay more than an average of two or three days in the same place. Advantageously, the Yamana travel in very small groups, usually as individual families, sometimes with a second or third family. They separate again after a short distance, because personal safety, of which everyone is conscious, drives them toward complete independence and unrestricted freedom.

2. Underway in the Canoe

The only and indispensable means of transportation of our Indians is their bark canoe. Since it is lightly constructed, the woman is not excessively burdened by paddling. The canoe belongs to her. Although the man must build it, the care of it is left to her alone (415). She takes this very seriously, for the

415. Bridges (MS# III, 115.1869) writes: "Canoes are always under the charge of the women, who paddle them from place to place, and spend much of their time in them" /cited in English/, namely, on the otherwise idle trip.

/333 cont./

Thus the territory of the Yamana shows a uniform character from one end to the other, for essentially the same natural conditions prevail everywhere and the total population is low.

The requirement of extraordinary mobility is linked with the form of economy created and adopted by the Fuegians, the only one possible there. At any one particular spot there are game and food for a single family for only one or two days; even if they wanted to stay longer, tormenting hunger would drive them on. To be heavily burdened with a quantity of tools and utensils, weapons, and clothing would soon prove unbearable. It is amazing to see how little in the way of material possessions our natives can get along with. They are not in the least hampered by them- for quick, flexible movement. Even the indispensable canoe is so light in weight and can be /334/ manipulated on the water with so little effort, that these advantages could hardly be increased. Implements and weapons weigh almost nothing in the hands of the one who carries them; hence everyone can move quickly on land. Although, upon landing, the natives must exert themselves for about half an hour to erect a hut, they abandon the framework when they leave, since it can serve them again upon their return. In all their manipulations our Indians are agile and quick.

Their modesty and contentment fit in very well with all this and must probably be regarded as a result of the circumscribed simplicity of their material property. Everyone has adapted himself with such matter-of-factness to the meager conditions of life and to the perceptible limitations imposed on that region by a parsimonious and niggardly Nature, as though there were nothing better elsewhere. Everyone is content with his lot, and no one grumbles about his fate. At the same time he is fully aware of his sovereign superiority over the blind forces of nature, and his confidence of victory incessantly drives him toward new risks or more difficult acts. His mental ability and his implements are completely sufficient for him. Hence he has, for many decades and with superior disdain, rejected all kinds of things from Europeans and, in satisfied self-sufficiency, has tenaciously clung to the traditional implements. With perceptive appreciation of all this, even Bridges (i):240 has defended our experienced, capable

/624 cont./

181 Fuegians against the unfavorable, premature judgments of some observers and has upheld them in the following decisive words: "The travelers who have visited them are wrong in condemning them for their poverty and ignorance, of which they are not guilty. The construction of their canoes, weapons, implements, etc., and the labor of obtaining their sustenance from the sea, the coast, and the woods occupy nearly all their time" /translated from Spanish/. But then in modern times when the foreign utensils brought by Europeans were finally introduced among the Yamana, the harmonious, compact economic structure of this Indian tribe was disrupted, and its complete disintegration was prepared.

177 181

Were the Fuegians outwardly and inwardly or spiritually enriched by their adoption in recent times of a not inconsiderable amount of European goods? I believe not. George Forster (b): 252 already answered this question in the same vein, writing from Christmas Sound in mid-December, 1774: "We described the savages living in the southern tip of our globe as miserable, degenerate, and decadent. Thus it seemed to us, thus it necessarily appeared to every European who knew and was accustomed to a better condition. In their own eyes they are not so unfortunate. Their way of life has become second-nature to them, they prefer it to any other, and not one of them would prefer our mild zone to their cold climate; his hut is dearer to him than a comfortable European residence; his seal skin seems more elegant to him than silks and embroidered clothing; a /625/ tasty dish from our kitchen by no means replaces the more delectable flavor of his seal meat." In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, I refer to my detailed accounts of the extended activity of the Anglican missionaries among the Yamana in several places of their country since the middle of the previous century (p. 288 /untranslated/), and of the manifold influence of all European civilization on these natives who have for several centuries already decreased considerably in numbers (p. 333, 348 /untranslated/).

Our Indians cling, with all the fibers of their being, to the traditional nomadic life to which they have long been accustomed. They find it unbearable to be impeded in this way of life, even temporarily. Despite the many benefits each of them has derived

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177 from his stay among the missionaries, "he returns with delight
181 to his canoe, to his independent wandering life, without pre-
occupation and without cares" /translated from French/, as Hyades (j):166 reports. Every outside observer can be adequately convinced that there is no other possible way of life for the Yamana; they are used to it from their earliest childhood; they are forced into it by their given environment, into which they have been inescapably placed. Care for their daily subsistence and the necessary raw materials for their implements drive them restlessly from place to place. This powerful motivation drives
181 our Yamana with equal force and toward the same goal as it does
171 the neighboring Selk'nam; hence the many basic similarities in the characteristics of their economies between the two tribes, with whom the Halakwulup are to be compared in this respect. All careful observers agree that "like the Ona, the Yahgan had to move freely and frequently in search of sustenance" /cited in English/, as Lothrop (b):116 tersely expresses himself. It is the instinct of self-preservation that makes both of them restless wanderers, that always and unmercifully puts them back on their feet again after they have given themselves a brief respite of only a few days. Despite this great dependence on external nature, our Fuegians have by no means become its slave, and their struggle for existence is not at all the degrading strife in which, for example, vast strata of so-called civilized Europe are at present engaged.

182 A glance at how the Yamana manage their affairs also shows that man with his superior mental equipment and his physical powers energetically comes to grips with nature on every spot of the earth that is entrusted to him. There he creates for himself a definite form of economy which will sooner or later strike every careful observer as harmonious co-operation between man and nature. Actually, the economic form of every long-domiciled primitive people possesses its inherent individuality conditioned by its environment and marked by its own structure. Thus, it is unique, and, despite external similarities with an economic form developed under other conditions, it differs from the latter /626/ more or less according to its inner structure, or at least according to its manifold purpose. This is not by any

1: Guiz_e--387 E-5 (1918-1924) 1937 SH6 Yahgan SH6

/628 cont./

981 The entire social order, as the aggregate of conjugal or familial arrangements and vital functions of the tribe or community, proves to be naturally humane and, therefore, appears in an altogether friendly, pleasant light.

A. Courtship and Marriage

594 The individual family, the supporting pillar of the entire social order, is regulated in its origin and its continuation according to fixed, unchangeable fundamental principles. These principles are kept alive as customs in the consciousness and conscience of the people. They are made known to each member of the tribe and are more or less familiar to him. Since custom and practice are the primary law in the performance of duty, the centuries have not eaten away any of this, and whatever has remained down to the present time is to be justly and lawfully regarded as ancient tribal heritage.

581 /629/ 594 The individual family consisting of parents and children is basically independent and a compact union. It is founded on mutual affection between the two lovers and the desire for life-long union. It is held together by the increasing spiritual relationship of the two partners. Its vitality is assured by the fellowship of work and possessions, food gathering and consumption. It grows beyond itself by the self-evident duty of parents to beget several children and through them to insure the permanence of the tribe.

581 177 Although these vital customs pertaining to the institution of the family have endured in century-long uniformity, foreign influences have exerted such pressure on it for several decades that this firm structure has finally become undermined. Conditions have arisen in recent times which cannot be regarded as natural, and their effects on marital conditions have created a sad caricature of the original pattern of marriage. These regrettable changes and the false and inadequate observations of most travelers since the middle of the previous century do not give a picture of the basic organization of the institution of the family among the Yamana (1).

583 114 1. What has been recorded from still older

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T84 a definite instance which he might have observed, and Hyades
T63 (q):342, referring to alleged infanticide and the strangulation of individuals on the point of death, relies on statements of the missionaries and is careful to say that "personally we have not been able to verify these last two assertions" /translated from French/. As late as 1929, Spencer:88, leaned toward this view, without any kind of proof.

T63 A way out of this uncertainty is provided by an opinion for which I am indebted to the brothers, Martin and Fred Lawrence, with whom I had long discussions. They said that it is possible and most likely that some one, at the sight of a relative caught in the death struggle, lost control of himself after several hours. In his agitation, driven by his own pain at the imminent separation from the dying one and impotent in the face of the hopelessness of recovery, he may have seized his throat and strangled him so that instantly the death rattle and any movement stopped. This happened, however, only when the dying person was completely unconscious and there was absolutely no hope of recovery. The desire was simply to terminate his agony.

Only once did I come across the following remark, "taken from conversations with Mrs. Burleigh" /cited in English/ (MM: XXVIII, 128:1894): "In some cases when the wife was near death the husband would put her into a canoe, take her miles away and leave her, hoping that exposure and starvation would hasten death" /cited in English/. Such behavior so obviously contradicts everything that has been definitely proved about the value of Yamana put on human life that any comment is superfluous. They have never been cannibals (p. 254 /untranslated/), nor does suicide [T62] occur among them, according to definite assertions by Dabbene (b):203 and Bridges (a):211.

• 181 The entire social order of our Fuegians impresses one as kind and worthy of human beings, for it rests on natural marital relations and favorable mutual relations between parents and children, between the members of a kinship group, and among all the local groups. The small population and the lack of serious disturbances from without facilitate the cohesion of the people as a whole. This social order is conditioned by the nature of the economy of our Yamana. The charming picture of the harmoniously balanced

1:Gusinde--946 E-5 (1918-1924) 1937 5098 Yahgan 5098

/1930 cont./

play of forces in this ethnic group on the Cape Horn Archipelago now belongs to the past. /Fig. 88 appears here./

/1931/ Part 4

The Spiritual World of the Yamana

There was a time not far back when people quite generally and as a matter of course inferred from the poverty and simplicity of the external arrangements and the objects used by a primitive people that they were lacking in ideas and that their spiritual world was limited. Ever since the Yamana were visited and superficially observed by European navigators, the entire cultured world has classed them among the most unworthy representatives of the human race on account of their inhospitable native land and the unfavorable conditions of their existence. Bonduff-40 and others often repeated: "The Fuegians are, according to Reinhold Forster's remarks, 'apparently the most miserable of all peoples.'" They were judged solely by what caught the eye and by the hasty first impression that their nakedness and unattractive appearance, their way of life, and their wild behavior inevitably makes upon every European. Once established, the general opinion became deeply entrenched and continued to be untouched by this or that report which sounded somewhat more favorable. How could such a report have brought about a complete change of the previously held view when the Yamana themselves did not change in any way externally!

It is not enough to evaluate a human group solely by what strikes the eye, for that reason modern ethnography in all seriousness desires penetration into the spiritual domain of every tribe.

Fig. 88. Diomedea exulans.

/1435 cont./

basic features of their mental attitude. Legend puts the origin of the medicine-man system outside the boundaries of present-day Yamana territory and connects it with the Kina. Maiemikens designated Hoipul, Yo'okalia, and other birds as the first yékamus (pp. 1288, 1371 /both untranslated/). "They taught their art to a few people and that is how it came to us!" There is no connection between the medicine-man system and the other institutions of our Fuegians; it is clearly a peculiar form within their culture as a whole.

G. Mental Capacity

No people on American soil has been rated as low and esteemed as little by the entire European world as our Yamana. The seed for this unjust opinion was sown by the crew of the Dutch fleet of L'Hermite, the first Europeans seen by the inhabitants of the Cape Horn Archipelago (p. 50 /untranslated/). The description that enjoyed the most notoriety was the inadequate and inaccurate account set down by Charles Darwin, then 22 years old (p. 97 /untranslated/). Although he occasionally made an accurate statement in his writings (343) and, as an old man, changed his opinion very much in favor of our Fuegians (p. 106 /untranslated/), nevertheless this did not effect the bias of the general public. Anyone who leafs through the amazingly large number of accounts by missionaries (p. 146 /untranslated/) will find it strange that the latter almost uniformly speak disparagingly, indeed, contemptuously of the mental performance of these natives, and their opinions of them have not improved despite decades of contact. Bridges outdoes all the other

> 343. He (f):I, 234 said: "The Fuegians belong among the lowest savages; I was constantly surprised, however, at how closely the three Fuegians on board the 'Beagle' ...resembled us in general traits and in most of our mental abilities."

/1435 cont./

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missionaries in his underestimation of the entire cultural heritage of our Fuegians (p. 323 /untranslated/), and none of the missionaries would have succeeded in persuading him otherwise. The Yamana soon realized that Bridges, with emphatic disdain, rejected their ideas and customs, which, without exception, were valuable to them and worthy of respect. Consequently they drew away from him and /1436/ made many of their spiritual possessions unavailable to him (p. 144 /untranslated/). Their attitude did not change even when Bridges, in exceptional cases, spoke a brief word in their favor (344). Actually, Bridges was the

> 344. These statements, such as the one in (i):12, therefore have much more value for an outsider: "These natives have usually been described as a great deal worse than they were. I well know they were bad enough as all ignorant, lawless people must be, but they were falsely reported to be cannibals, and the sketches of them have been rather caricatures than likenesses" /cited in English/.

adviser and the decisive source of information for all the visitors to Tierra del Fuego who consulted him during his long years of missionary activity. His many publications were also regarded as those of an authoritative observer whom others had no opportunity to correct. Although the members of the Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn, for example, maintained close contact with a group of natives there for an entire year, nevertheless their publications prove how dependent they were on Bridges, especially in their evaluation of the spiritual equipment and mental assets of the Yamana. This state of affairs explains the uniformly low opinion of almost all the travelers who commented on the mental capacity of our Fuegians. Nevertheless, favorable testimony, such as that of Snow (b):266, is not altogether lacking: "I will only venture to call your attention to the fact, that these savages have a heart and feeling as well as we have. And I saw many instances of warm love and affection for the children, and for each other" /cited in English/.

/1436 cont./

•181 Experts on primitive peoples soon cast doubt upon the trust-
114 worthiness of all those reports on Tierra del Fuego, and from in-
significant accounts as well as fair judgments, they brought out
many a favorable detail. Waitz:507 emphasized: "One must
not believe that the mental dullness [of the Fuegians] prevails
throughout among them... The four Fuegians whom Captain Fitz-
Roy took with him to London showed altogether good qualities."
Ratzel:I, 520 appreciates their material possessions and social
institutions. Beyond that he declares: "The more one learned
of their sensibilities and mental capacities upon closer contact,
the higher one evaluated them in this respect. The Fuegians,
even though they are oppressed by the misery of their situation,
are basically Indians like all the rest. The inadequate results
of missions cannot prove anything to the contrary." Thus, if
the Yamana are judged to be genuine Indians, they must also be
regarded as capable human beings. The fact that they are indeed
such is convincingly proved by their way of life which has been
described in the foregoing pages. The following pages will be
a not inconsiderable supplement to this. It seems strange to us
who have been privileged to obtain such deep insight into the
mental life of most of the primitive peoples still available today
that it seems necessary to prove that the Yamana, too, are al-
together human beings.

/1437/ a. Mental Power and Sensory Activity

153 I regard as beside the point the oft-repeated question as to
182 whether the Yamana are an "intelligent people" and capable of
meeting the demands of our culture. One will obtain a just
evaluation of their mental powers only after he has learned to
understand the Fuegians with respect to their mastery of their
environment. They have adapted themselves excellently to their
country: they have learned to use the available materials for
serviceable implements and have asserted their superiority in their
struggle with the forces of nature. Indeed, they maintain them-
selves in their environment and have attained several not incon-
siderable achievements of which many Europeans would be

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
S?t6 Yahgan S?t6

talkowd (as attested by the finding of bone buttons), elaborate three-strand necklaces were manufactured, and, above all, sculpture was common and painting had reached both relatively and absolutely a very developed plane. The depiction of masked human figures suggests parallel religious phantasmagoria in both regions. In contrast the Fuegians were totally devoid of sculpture, and their painting was limited to the crudest daubs. Their necklaces were most primitive. Their garments were merely wrapped around the body and held in place by hand, or, if they did not completely envelop the body, were tied on by thongs cruising the bare flesh.

As to polished stone implements, Tierra del Fuego has produced few. In fig. 41 we show a bola from the east coast. Outes (1908, p. 427) has fully demonstrated that the true home of this weapon is in the northeastern Pampas and that it was unknown in Patagonia until the eighteenth century. Clearly it is no ancestral arm carried to Tierra del Fuego by Foot Indians in remote centuries, but rather a recent introduction, not long antedating the white colonization. Also we have seen a stone spike excavated in Yahgan territory. Apparently it has been shaped in part by pecking; at best it is an isolated instance of the Neolithic technique.

The rarity of polished stone implements in Fuegia is to be explained not by the lack of aptitude but by the indolence of the natives. To so-called civilized man the chipping of stone seems a mysterious craft, while it is patent that anyone who takes the time can grind a stone to the desired shape. As a matter of fact, the chipping of serviceable tools can be learned with a few days' practice, though of course the more delicate flaking, as with all handicraft, can come only as the result of long experience. And furthermore, chipped implements can be turned out quickly,—it takes only ten or fifteen minutes for a skilful Ona to finish a most delicate arrow-point,—while ground stone implements require patience, mental discipline, and foresight.

This point is one to recall in estimates of all or any phases of Fuegian culture, for it will be found that deficiencies arose not from any innate mental or physical handicap, but from laziness and lethargy. This generalization applies not so much to the necessaries as to the conveniences of life. Thus the Ona bow and the Yahgan spear are admirable weapons, but the houses of both tribes were woefully inadequate. Yet there is no reason why the Yahgan and Ona should not, with forethought and initiative,

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
E995 Yahgan E996
Seri (NU)

have made themselves as comfortable as other tribes occupying an equivalent environment. That they did not, to the writer, indicates a lack of something vital in their mental makeup.

The brief comparison we have made between primitive European and Fuegian cultures shows that although the Fuegians had partly attained the technological phase called Neolithic in the Old World, nevertheless in most respects they were scarcely better off than the semi-simian Neanderthal man of Europe. Clearly then they were laggards or backsliders in the development of mankind, so that in depicting their manner of life we are justified in assuming that we are recreating a vista of life in Europe or elsewhere many thousands of years ago.

However, the tribes of Tierra del Fuego are not a unique phenomenon, as we shall show by comparison with an equally though differently untutored New World group.

B.—Fuegians Compared with the Seri

The Seri, who inhabit a barren territory on the eastern shore of the Gulf of California and the adjacent islands, of which the largest is Tiburon, are one of the most primitive Indian tribes on the North American continent. Their climate is hot and dry. Their food supply is abundant—both marine and terrestrial. Like Fuegia the region occupied by the Seri is isolated from the main stream of cultural development, so that the native society probably represents a form of life much more wide-spread long ago.

Like the Fuegians, the Seri had no agriculture and no domestic animals except the dog, which indeed seems to have been half-wild. Their most important food was the turtle, which they caught with a harpoon having a detachable head tied to a cord. This may be compared to the Yahgan seal-spear. Long ago they used a two-headed barbed spear with the barbs facing inward to catch fish. The Yahgan also employed a two-headed fish-spear, but did not set the barbs inward. For boats the Seri made reed balsas with high pointed ends, a seaworthy craft but one which can be used only in warm climates because in rough weather the crew are drenched with spray or wet by water coming through the floor. These balsas the Seri propelled with clam-shells or boards held in the hands. In addition to spearing fish off-shore the Seri also caught them with their hands in shallow pools at low tide like the Ona, and they obtained on the beach large quantities of shellfish—chiefly clams and oysters.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

We have already pointed out that the lack of mental vigor seemingly underlay the cultural deficiencies of the Fuegians. This in turn we may trace to their manner of life, thus forming a vicious circle. Partial subsistence in the snows of winter is possible only to those endowed with a constitution we cannot help but admire, yet it can only result in unusual demands on the vitality and in the stunting of mental growth. Out of such pictures as the naked mother nursing a naked new-born child with driving sleet melting on them both, described by Darwin (1839, p. 235), one cannot envisage the breeding of mentally alert human beings. The Yahgan, writes Bentley (1904), mark "the limit to which a man may strip himself of all aid and comfort and yet survive and perpetuate his kind." "Their skill," says Darwin, "in some respects may be compared to the instinct of animals; for it is not improved by experience."

The writer does not regard the climate of Tierra del Fuego as a necessarily stunting factor; indeed the ample and hospitable scale of living introduced by the sheep ranchers proves that it is far from so. Wild foods—vegetal, game, and fish—can be procured with comparative ease. The discomforts of aboriginal life could well have been eradicated by forethought and a more aggressive mental attitude. This the missionaries tried vigorously if unsuccessfully to instil, and so the Fuegian tribes have quietly melted away in the face of the competition of our ruthless civilization.

[pp. 21)-4 continue no text]